

## Case 3124

***Apis proava* Menge, 1856 (currently *Electrapis proava*; Insecta, Hymenoptera): proposed conservation by designation of a neotype**

Michael S. Engel

*Department of Entomology, American Museum of Natural History,  
Central Park West at 79th Street, New York, N.Y. 10024-5192, U.S.A.*

**Abstract.** The purpose of this application is to provide stability to the name *Apis proava* Menge, 1856 for a species of fossil bee occurring in the Eocene fauna of Europe. The lectotype designated by Zeuner & Manning (1976) is now in extremely poor condition and little information on the bee's identity can be gleaned from this specimen. The paralectotype, however, is in relatively good condition and can be confidently assigned. It is proposed that the original lectotype designation be set aside and the paralectotype be designated as neotype, thereby stabilizing the identity of *Apis proava*.

**Keywords.** Nomenclature; taxonomy; Hymenoptera; APIDAE; fossil bees; Baltic amber; Eocene; *Apis proava*.

---

1. Menge (1856, p. 26) established the name *Apis proava* for a species of fossil bee preserved in Eocene Baltic amber. The description was based on two specimens, neither of which was designated as the type.

2. Zeuner & Manning (1976, pp. 236-238), in a monographic study of the fossil bees of the world published posthumously from accumulated notes, identified as Menge's original specimens two fossil bees in the Palaeontology Department of the Natural History Museum, London, which had been bought in 1892. Zeuner & Manning (p. 236) designated one specimen (BM(NH) In.43592) as the lectotype and the other (BM(NH) In.18757) as the paralectotype. They (p. 237) described the lectotype as being 'well preserved' but, owing to the removal of the amber piece from the block of balsam in which it was preserved, it is now in exceedingly poor condition. Zeuner & Manning transferred the species into the fossil genus *Electrapis* Cockerell, 1908, subgenus *Roussyana* Manning, 1960.

3. The name *Apis proava* Menge has been used by a number of authors (e.g., Buttell-Reepen, 1915; Kerr & da Cunha, 1976; Winston & Michener, 1977; Ruttner, 1988; a further list of nine references is held by the Commission Secretariat).

4. I (Engel, 1998, p. 95), while proposing a preliminary classification of bees considered to constitute the subtribe ELECTRAPINA Engel, 1998, provisionally transferred *Apis proava* into the new subgenus *Melikertes* Engel, 1998, together with the type species *E. (Melikertes) stilbonota* Engel, 1998. Zeuner & Manning's description of the lectotype consists of characters which are indicative only of higher-level placement at subfamily or tribe level or are meaningless, e.g., 'an antenna cleaner of a somewhat primitive type' (p. 237) with no indication of what 'primitive type' corresponds to morphologically. Similarly, their illustration (pl. 3, fig. 3) of the

lectotype does not help in identifying it below tribe level. In contrast, examination of the paralectotype shows that it clearly belongs to *Melikertes*; the transfer of *proava* was therefore made provisional since the actual nature of the lectotype (i.e., the name-bearing type) could not be confirmed.

5. The designated lectotype leaves the identity of *Apis proava* entirely ambiguous and stability of the name is lost. I am presently involved in a monographic study of the Baltic amber bees and propose the stabilization of *Apis proava* Menge by replacement of the unidentifiable name-bearing type by a neotype in accordance with Article 75.5 of the forthcoming 4th Edition of the Code. Recommendation 75A advises authors to choose neotypes from any surviving paralectotypes unless there are compelling reasons to the contrary. I therefore propose that the paralectotype (specimen BM(NH) In.18757), described and illustrated by Zeuner & Manning (1976, p. 237, pl. 3, fig. 4), should be designated as neotype.

6. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to use its plenary powers to set aside all previous fixations of type specimen for the nominal species *Apis proava* Menge, 1856 and to designate as neotype the paralectotype (specimen no. BM(NH) In.18757 in the Palaeontology Department, the Natural History Museum, London);
- (2) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the name *proava* Menge, 1856, as published in the binomen *Apis proava* and as defined by the neotype designated in (1) above.

## References

- Buttel-Reepen, H. von. 1915. *Leben und Wesen der Bienen*. xiv, 300 pp. Friedrich Vieweg, Brunswick.
- Cockerell, T.D.A. 1908. Descriptions and records of bees. XX. *Annals and Magazine of Natural History*, (8)2: 323–334.
- Engel, M.S. 1998. A new species of the Baltic amber bee genus *Electrapis* (Hymenoptera: Apidae). *Journal of Hymenoptera Research*, 7: 94–101.
- Kerr, W.E. & da Cunha, R.A. 1976. Taxonomic position of two fossil social bees (Apidae). *Revista de Biologia Tropical*, 24: 35–43.
- Manning, F.J. 1960. A new fossil bee from Baltic amber. *Proceedings of the 11th International Congress of Entomology, Vienna*, 1: 306–308.
- Menge, A. 1856. *Lebenszeichen vorweltlicher, im Bernstein eingeschlossener Thiere*. 32 pp. Programm Petrischule, Danzig.
- Ruttner, F. 1988. *Biogeography and taxonomy of honeybees*. xxii, 284 pp. Springer Verlag, Berlin.
- Winston, M.L. & Michener, C.D. 1977. Dual origin of highly social behavior among bees. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 74: 1135–1137.
- Zeuner, F.E. & Manning, F.J. 1976. A monograph on fossil bees (Hymenoptera: Apoidea). *Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History), Geology*, 27: 149–268.

---

Comments on this case are invited for publication (subject to editing) in the *Bulletin*; they should be sent to the Executive Secretary, I.C.Z.N., c/o The Natural History Museum, Cromwell Road, London SW7 5BD, U.K. (e-mail: iczn@nhm.ac.uk).